

July 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Statement on the Settlement of Railroad Contract Disputes

July 30, 1996

These agreements represent a triumph of the collective bargaining process. I commend the parties for their hard work in reaching these settlements. I also commend our Presidential Emergency Boards for developing recommendations that helped to bring about these resolutions.

In the past 25 years, Congress has had to step in no fewer than 10 times to prevent national rail stoppages. Such stoppages can cost American businesses and consumers billions of dollars. The voluntary contract agreements achieved this year broke that pattern and represent a milestone for labor-management relations.

Letter to Members of Congress on Proposed Safe Drinking Water Legislation

July 30, 1996

Dear _____ :

I urge the Congress to pass strong legislation that protects our nation's drinking water. Although the conferees have made considerable progress, it is imperative that I sign this legislation into law by August 1. If the House and Senate fail to act, \$725 million in federal funding will cease to be available for this important health and safety initiative.

All Americans have the right to know that their drinking water is safe. This legislation should solidify that right by strengthening health and safety standards in addition to protecting the public from significant threats to our drinking water. It is critical that the Congress approve

legislation that provides both a reasonable framework to improve our nation's water supply in addition to the funding and flexibility necessary for communities to make these improvements a reality.

A compromise bill containing these priorities is clearly within reach. I hope that we seize this opportunity and pass this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

BILL

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to congressional conferees meeting to consider S. 1316.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Legislation on Labor-Management Relations

July 30, 1996

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval, H.R. 743, the "Teamwork for Employees and Managers Act of 1995." This act would undermine crucial employee protections.

I strongly support workplace practices that promote cooperative labor-management relations. In order for the United States to remain globally competitive into the next century, employees must recognize their stake in their em-

ployer's business, employers must value their employees' labor, and each must work in partnership with the other. Cooperative efforts, by promoting mutual trust and respect, can encourage innovation, improve productivity, and enhance the efficiency and performance of American workplaces.

Current law provides for a wide variety of cooperative workplace efforts. It permits employers to work with employees in quality circles

to improve quality, efficiency, and productivity. Current law also allows employers to delegate significant managerial responsibilities to employee work teams, sponsor brainstorming sessions, and solicit employee suggestions and criticisms. Today, 30,000 workplaces across the country have employee involvement plans. According to one recent survey, 96 percent of large employers already have established such programs.

I strongly support further labor-management cooperation within the broad parameters allowed under current law. To the extent that recent National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decisions have created uncertainty as to the scope of permissible cooperation, the NLRB, in the exercise of its independent authority, should provide guidance to clarify the broad legal boundaries of labor-management teamwork. The Congress rejected a more narrowly defined proposal designed to accomplish that objective.

Instead, this legislation, rather than promoting genuine teamwork, would undermine the system of collective bargaining that has served this

country so well for many decades. It would do this by allowing employers to establish company unions where no union currently exists and permitting company-dominated unions where employees are in the process of determining whether to be represented by a union. Rather than encouraging true workplace cooperation, this bill would abolish protections that ensure independent and democratic representation in the workplace.

True cooperative efforts must be based on true partnerships. A context of mutual trust and respect encourages the prospect for achieving workplace innovation, improved productivity, and enhanced efficiency and workplace performance. Any ambiguities in this situation should be resolved, but without weakening or eliminating the fundamental rights of employees to collective bargaining.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 30, 1996.

Remarks on Welfare Reform Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters July 31, 1996

The President. Good afternoon. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to end welfare as we know it. I have worked very hard for 4 years to do just that. Today the Congress will vote on legislation that gives us a chance to live up to that promise: to transform a broken system that traps too many people in a cycle of dependence to one that emphasizes work and independence, to give people on welfare a chance to draw a paycheck, not a welfare check. It gives us a better chance to give those on welfare what we want for all families in America, the opportunity to succeed at home and at work. For those reasons I will sign it into law. The legislation is, however, far from perfect. There are parts of it that are wrong, and I will address those parts in a moment. But on balance, this bill is a real step forward for our country, our values, and for people who are on welfare.

For 15 years, I have worked on this problem, as Governor and as a President. I've spent time in welfare offices. I have talked to mothers on

welfare who desperately want the chance to work and support their families independently. A long time ago I concluded that the current welfare system undermines the basic values of work, responsibility, and family, trapping generation after generation in dependency and hurting the very people it was designed to help.

Today we have an historic opportunity to make welfare what it was meant to be, a second chance, not a way of life. And even though the bill has serious flaws that are unrelated to welfare reform, I believe we have a duty to seize the opportunity it gives us to end welfare as we know it.

Over the past 3½ years, I have done everything in my power as President to promote work and responsibility, working with 41 States to give them 69 welfare reform experiments. We have also required teen mothers to stay in school, required Federal employees to pay their child support, cracked down on people who owe child support and crossed State lines. As a result,